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SUBJECT { GENERAL
SPECIFIC

Communist Matters
Communist Activities in Central America

REF: DIR 47077, 17 April 1954

There is attached a summary of Communist activities in
Central America, particularly in Guatemala.

JEROME C. DUNBAR

GSV/lk

21 April 1954

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COMMUNISM IN CENTRAL AMERICA

The Communist movement in Guatemala and Central America is part of the world movement of Communist Parties. All Communist Parties, acting under the direction of the Soviet Union, follow the same general pattern in seeking to capture free social institutions and democratic governments. Some operate openly and others clandestinely, but all are integral parts of the world wide Communist effort. Communism as an ideology, in Guatemala as in other countries, is only a creed for a small militant and power-hungry group. Communist successes are largely the result of an effective use of operational techniques designed to effect the greatest possible degree of control over the most important elements of the local political structure.

In Guatemala these elements are infiltrated at top levels by Communists with the result that the government and economy are effectively controlled by the Party. President Jacobo ARBENZ and other prominent government and military officials are not members of the Communist Party. However, ARBENZ has used the Communists to further his own political ambitions, and to a great extent he is now dependent upon them for the support which he needs to stay in power. For all practical purposes he and his chief aides follow the Communist line in their speeches and actions, and they have relied in an increasing measure upon the advice of Communist leaders. The latter constitute the real government of Guatemala in the sense that they have a decisive influence on all important moves, either directly through government officials or through pressure tactics on the

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part of controlled organizations. As long as the Army, few officials of which are under Communist influence, continues to support ARBENZ, it is likely that Communist power will grow.

The most influential Communists and pro-Communists in Guatemala at the present time are the following:

Jose Manuel ^XFORTUNY

Secretary General of the Communist Guatemalan Labor Party (PGT).

Carlos Manuel ^XPELLECE

Secretary of Disputes of the General Confederation of Guatemalan Workers (CGTG). Deputy in National Congress.

Augusto ^XCHARNAUD McDonald

Secretary General of the Party of the Guatemalan Revolution (PRG). Minister of Government.

Victor Manuel ^XGUTIERREZ

Secretary General of the CGTG. Deputy National Congress.

Leonardo ^XCASTILLO Flores

Secretary General of the National Farm Workers of Guatemala (CNCG).

Julio ^XESTRADA de la Hoz

Secretary General of the Party of Revolutionary Action (PAR). Deputy National Congress

Dora ^XFRANCO y Franco

Secretary General of Alliance of Guatemalan Women (AFG).

Humberto ^XALVARADO

Head of PGT Youth Commission which controls AJDG.

Cesar Augusto ^XCAZALI Avila

Secretary General of Democratic University Front (FUD).

Waldemar ^XBARRIOS Klee

Chief of Lands Section of National Agrarian Department and Assistant to Director.

All of the above occupy positions in which they can wield considerable influence over the attitudes and activities of the government. It will be noted that aside from the three deputies only two hold government positions.

The majority are directors of mass organizations which have been formed as centers for Communist propaganda and agitation.

One of the principal Communist objectives in Guatemala, as elsewhere, has been to gain control of propaganda media. The government radio station TGW is under the direction of Carlos ^XALVARADO Jerez, (a ^{Guat}Communist), and (the official government paper) ^XDiario de Centro America, gives considerable favorable publicity to Communist-front activities. In addition, there are three other Communist-line papers. The leading Communist-front groups are the National Peace Committee, the AJDG and the FUD. In the case of virtually all front organizations a PGT member will be found in a key post, usually Secretary General or Organizational Secretary.

Guatemala has become the focal point of Communism in Central America, and during recent years it has encouraged the growth of Marxist ideas in the neighboring countries of Honduras, Nicaragua, and El Salvador.

Guatemalan Communists have also been actively engaged in the development of intelligence nets, not only in Guatemala itself, but in the bordering countries. The most active centers of Communist activity in Honduras have

been along the border in the area near San Pedro Sula. The Guatemalan Consul in that town directs this activity, and Col. Jose Luis ^XMORALES, (Guatemalan Military Attache in Tegucigalpa) is in charge of Guatemalan

Communist activities for Honduras as a whole. During recent months there has been a noticeable expansion of Communist efforts in Honduras, and the number of Guatemalan agents crossing the frontier has increased. Several agents have been sent into Honduras as ostensible exiles with instructions

to join opposition groups, especially that headed by Lt. Col. Carlos
X CASTILLO Armas. The most recent group of such agents included Capt. Marco
Antonio X GARCIA, Francisco X PEREIRA and Francisco X CONTRERAS.

In El Salvador the best organized Communist movement is in the rail-
way workers' union. Communists have planned the assassination of several
Salvadoran officials, and Communist plots against the government have been
discovered and prevented. During 1953 many Communists were picked up by
the police and deported. One such group was suspected of being implicated
in an assassination plot against ^(Salv) Foreign Minister Roberto X CANESSA. All
of these Communist exiles found a safe haven in Guatemala. Miguel X MARMOL
and Virgilio X GUERRA, ^(Salvadoran Communists) are active in the Guatemalan
labor movement, and there is a group of young Salvadoran leftists under
the leadership of Manuel Otilio X HASBUN, <sup>(formerly President of the General
Association of Salvadoran University Students)</sup>. The latter were warmly
welcomed by GUTIERREZ.

Exiles from El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, and the Dominican
Republic have committees in Guatemala, which work in conjunction with the
PTG. The Salvadoran Democratic Association meets in the PTG's Tribuna
Popular. Leftists exiles from many other Latin American countries are also
present in Guatemala. They are given jobs or otherwise provided for by
the PTG or its affiliated organizations. The Nicaraguan group is headed
by Edelberto X TORRES Rivas, ^(Secretary General of the AJDG) and Armando
X FLORES Amador. Some of the Nicaraguan exiles were involved in the abortive
coup in Nicaragua in April 1954, and there are indications that the PTG

and the Guatemalan government may have given some support to the preparations for that revolutionary attempt.

Over the past five years many prominent Guatemalan Communists and Party sympathizers have travelled to the Soviet Union and the satellite countries. Four Guatemalans attended the Peking Peace Conference in October 1952. In November of that year four delegates were named to the Vienna Peace Congress, and in the following month thirteen Guatemalans attended the WFTU Social Security Conference in Vienna. The Guatemalan delegation to the Budapest World Peace Council in June 1953 included Lt. Col. Carlos X PAZ Tejada and Major Marco Antonio FRANCO. During the period from June to December 1953 a total of 48 Guatemalans visited the Russian orbit and eleven of these went to Moscow. In December 1953 GUTIERREZ returned from Moscow at the head of a delegation which had toured the Soviet Union after attending the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) Congress in Vienna. FORTUNEY departed for Moscow in November 1953 and returned to Guatemala on 8 January 1954.

Communists have gained control of the Guatemalan labor movement principally by means of a drive to create strong organizations under Party control. Guatemalan labor unions were consolidated into a single main federation, the CGTG, in 1951 under the close supervision of Confederation of Latin American Workers advisers. (CTAL). Affiliation of the CGTG with the CTAL and the WFTU followed in 1953. Today organized labor is a militant and significant force in Guatemala. The CGTG has more

than 500 affiliated unions, and a total of approximately 300,000 members. The Secretary General is GUTIERREZ, member of the Political Committee of the PGT, and every other key office of the CGTG is held by a Communist Party member. GUTIERREZ, PELLECE and Victor A. LEAL were elected to the General Council of the WFTU in November 1953. At the Second National Congress of the CGTG in January 1954 it was proposed that Guatemala resume relations with the Soviet Union and "foreign intervention" was protested. At CGTG headquarters in Guatemala City the red Communist flag flew beside the Guatemalan emblem. The principal foreign delegate to this congress was Giuseppe Casadei, member of the permanent staff of the WFTU Secretariat in Vienna. This is the first instance in which a permanent WFTU staff member has attended a national meeting in any Latin American country.

Guatemalan Communists adopted Agrarian Reform as their central theme in 1952, and Communists took an active part in committee hearings on the Agrarian Law in Congress. This law created the National Agrarian Department, which is the central administrative agency, and Communists have heavily infiltrated this organization. The head of the Lands Section ^{five} is BARRIOS, who assumes charge in the absence of the director, Major Alfonso MARTINEZ. The Secretary General is Maria Jerez de FORTUNE (wife of the PGT chief). Seven of the twenty Agrarian Inspectors are PGT members and another eight are believed to be affiliated with that Party. In addition, another twelve employees are known PGT members.

MARTINEZ has steadily lost ground in his efforts to have agrarian

*Nalhemar BARRIOS Klee - was acting Chief during Major MARTINEZ' absence -
The listing on page 2 of This document - is correct.*

changes carried out in an orderly manner. In pressing MARTINEZ for rapid implementation of the law the PGT leaders have clearly demonstrated that they regard the present situation as transitory and merely the foundation for the eventual transformation of Guatemala into a Socialist state. The Agrarian Reform program has provided the Communists with weapons which may be useful as their struggle for domination continues. The State has now become by far the country's largest landholder, since the private lands expropriated under the law have been turned over to the peasants only in life use. The PGT has been successful in identifying itself with the changes being made under Agrarian Reform, and is counting on this situation to break the power of the landowners and United Fruit and bring about its domination of the government. Of late the Party has inspired illegal land seizures which have led to violence in some sections. PELLECCER, the most aggressive of the PGT leaders, has been assigned the task of inciting the peasants to invade private property. ARBENZ himself has described Agrarian Reform as the "most transcendental force in our economic and political life."

In manners such as these, given sufficient freedom in which to operate and faced with ineffective opposition, the Communist organizational and operational techniques tend to confuse and corrupt a country until it can be brought under effective control. The penetration of Communists into selected agencies enables the Party to force policy and personnel changes, nullify opposition and strengthen its capabilities. Communists seek power through the exploitation of any issue and the discontented elements of any group.